

The Mountie, the Marshal and the Negotiator

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The Mountie, the Marshal and the Negotiator

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The Mountie, the Marshal and the Negotiator by slef

The door to the Consulate opened, and Benton Fraser, on duty at the reception desk, looked up to see a familiar figure striding purposefully towards him.

"Deputy Gerard!" he greeted with a welcoming grin that was immediately quashed by the thundercloud look on Gerard's face. "What's wrong?" he asked worriedly.

Since their adventure in the mine tunnel, Fraser had bumped into Gerard once or twice, and had found him a no-nonsense, down-to-earth guy, but he normally was at least civil.

"That partner of yours!" Gerard exploded. He paced for a few steps and then sprawled in the chair opposite Fraser's desk.

Fraser sighed. Things were becoming clear. Ray was supposed to be "assisting" the marshals on a case, but as usual he didn't take too well to taking orders, not even, it seemed, from Sam Gerard.

"What has he done now, Sam?" he asked carefully.

"He has made a bet with Cosmo..." Sam started. He tried to keep his face straight but couldn't prevent a smile from forming as he

finished: "They are trying to see which of them is the most stylish, which means I have two peacocks in my office right now, comparing their jackets!" He ended on a note of disgust that had Fraser smiling broadly.

"Oh! I'm sorry, Sam. I don't think I can help you with that."

"I know that! I just wanted some peace and quiet for a while. The office is a mad-house!"

Fraser felt confused. Two guys comparing jackets surely couldn't cause that much chaos?

"I don't understand," he said uncertainly.

Sam blinked.

"Did I say they were comparing jackets? They each brought their entire wardrobe... the place is a mess!"

This time Fraser couldn't help laughing as he pictured the scene in his head.

"Oh dear," he said. "Well, you're welcome to my chair any time you want."

"Thanks, I..." Sam was interrupted by the ringing of his cell phone.

"Sorry... Gerard!"

He listened for a moment.

"Right." Stowing away the phone, he rose. "I have to go."

Fraser checked the clock in the hallway.

"I'm off-duty from now on. Can I come along?"

"Sure." Turning around and making for the door, Sam didn't even check to see if Fraser was following.

On their way to the Federal building, Sam used the time to get Fraser up to speed on the case.

"As you know we're looking for that Vine fellow. He was sentenced to 30 years for murder and escaped a week ago during a transfer to Illinois State Penitentiary. CPD is assisting because we suspect he might be in the city, and he used to be a cop."

Sam broke off to navigate through some heavy traffic, turned a corner and had to brake heavily to avoid the police barriers set in the street. "What the hell?" he muttered.

Winding down the window, he called to an attending policeman.

"Gerard, Marshal's Office. What's going on?"

The cop walked over and looked into the car. His eyebrows rose as he

noticed Fraser's red uniform, but he answered Sam without commenting.

"I'm sorry, sir. The Federal building has been evacuated. We have a hostage situation on level 20..." Honking horns caught his attention and he wheeled away to answer.

"Level 20," Sam said. "That's Internal Affairs. I wonder what's up."

Switching on the police lights he slowly took the car through the throng and parked just outside the cleared area. They got out of the car and almost immediately came upon Sam's team and Ray, standing around in a cluster, craning their necks to try to see the action, just like everyone else there.

Cosmo and Ray looked like they walked out of a photo-shoot for GQ, and they were debating the virtues of Armani, totally ignoring the fact that they were standing in the middle of the street.

"Cosmo!" Sam interrupted. "What's up?"

Cosmo tore himself away from his scintillating conversation.

"Hi Sam. Remember that hotshot negotiator at CPD?"

"Yeah...Roman, right?"

"Danny Roman, yeah. Seems he's suspect in the murder of his partner and also knows what's happened to a sizable bit of the disability fund... and now he's taken IA director Niebaum, his commanding officer and a couple of civilians hostage up there."

"Hey," Ray interrupted. "I know Danny Roman, and there's no way that he's guilty. He must have some reason for this."

"And what do you know?" Cosmo flamed up. "A man who says I have no taste have no brain..."

As the running verbal war flared up again, Sam turned thoughtfully to Fraser.

"I know Roman too," he said. "This doesn't make sense."

But the team could find out nothing more from their vantage point and they eventually dispersed for home.

Early the next morning Sam returned to find the street deserted, but the 20th floor's windows were broken and evidence of smoke was visible on the building.

Since no one barred his way he went up to the 13th floor to find the place in much the same state as the previous day. Sighing, he went into his office and called up a buddy to find out what had happened the night before.

It turned out to be a long and complicated story, but ended with Roman being proved innocent, but in hospital, because the negotiator, one Chris Sabien, had shot him to trick the guilty parties into revealing themselves. IA was in a state of chaos, with their director

dead, their offices destroyed and seven CPD officers implicated in a large-scale fraud. Sabien was the hero of the day but could be found outside a door in downtown Chicago, talking to yet another psycho.

Sam thanked his friend and hung up. As the rest of the team showed up, events resumed their normal flow and Sam didn't think about the whole thing until about a week later.

* * *

The search for Vine was progressing slowly, but then one afternoon Ray and Fraser showed up with an anonymous tip: Vine had been spotted at a shopping mall.

The team was out of the office and on the way in record time, tired of days of endless plotting and eager for the catch.

It would be a difficult situation, finding and apprehending him in the busy mall. The team split up in pairs and started looking around. Fraser, in his dress uniform, attracted a lot of attention from children and pretty girls, all of which Ray patiently endured with a long-suffering expression.

Biggs and Savannah were canvassing the lower level, while Sam and Cosmo had a higher vantage point looking down from the quieter upper level. Sam was studying the people moving about and had just pinpointed a likely suspect when Ray called in on the radio.

"We've seen him, Sam! He's on the middle level, walking towards the back elevators."

"Keep him in sight. Don't spook him!" Sam barked. "Ok, kids, did you hear that?"

"Yes Sam."

"Yes."

"Coming, Sam."

In a matter of half a minute they were all converging on Vine, who still did not seem to notice them. At Sam's signal, Biggs, Cosmo and Savannah started to jump him, but stopped abruptly when he whirled around, gun ready, aimed at Fraser.

"I wouldn't do that," he warned politely. "Lower your weapons or Mr. Cherry here, dies."

"It's no use, Vine!" Sam said, his gun aimed unwaveringly at Vine. "Give it up!"

"Ah-ahh," Vine said mockingly. "I'm not alone ... you might want to stand down, Deputy Gerard."

"What?" Various exclamations of dismay from the team followed the appearance of four other armed men.

Resignedly, Sam lowered his gun.

"Stand down, kids," he ordered. He was furious for walking into the trap but was careful not to let it show.

"What do you want, Vine? You know you can't get away with this." Vine grinned.

"I want you to leave, Deputy... all of you, but Mr. Cherry and his sidekick can stay to make sure you come back with what I want," gesturing towards Ray and Fraser, who were keeping perfectly still.

"What do you want?" Sam repeated.

"I want you to go get super negotiator Chris Sabien, the one that helped my former buddy Danny so nicely last week."

"You're saying you're innocent, too?" Sam asked sarcastically. Vine was suddenly angry.

"No questions. Just get Sabien!" He motioned to his henchmen, who prodded Fraser and Ray into an empty shop.

"You, Deputy, had better go. I hear Sabien's a busy man..." He grinned and ducked into the shop. Then the door was barricaded and Sam was left there, fuming.

He had never felt so helpless in his life, except maybe the time he'd found Noah, bleeding to death, and had known he couldn't do a thing. He'd run away then, left the boy to die when he should have stayed with him. It was easier to chase after Sheridan than stay.

But now his friends were in danger and he vowed to himself to get it right this time.

* * *

Half an hour later, after numerous phone calls, meetings with CPD officers and lots of hard-assed organizing to stay in command, Sam finally arrived at a tenement building downtown, where the street actually closely resembled the one at the mall, crawling with police: the scene of yet another hostage drama.

By intimidation, cajoling and virtual bribery, Sam eventually found himself inside, facing the legendary Chris Sabien for the first time. Sam immediately saw that here was a guy, although of average build and nondescript appearance, who would not take any nonsense and who probably deserved the high praise he got.

Sabien, understandably enough, was not pleased at being interrupted. He moved away from the door where he was crouching and accosted Sam.

"Who're you?"

"Sam Gerard, U.S. Marshal's office," Sam replied.

Sabien blinked. "We already know where this guy is," he quipped, gesturing towards the door. "What are you doing here?"

"There's a guy holding a gun in a shopping mall not far away. He

wants to talk to you."

"Get someone else, I'm busy here," Sabien said, already dismissing Sam and turning to the task at hand.

Sam wasn't about to let him.

"He has a CPD officer and a constable of the RCMP hostage, and he's asking for you, by name."

Sabien turned back with an exasperated sigh.

"Look, do you want me to just put this guy on hold? It doesn't work like that. He's got his wife and two little kids in there and he's threatening to kill them all. I have a responsibility here."

"I know," Sam surrendered. "I'm sorry."

He turned away and walked out, wondering what to do. CPD had another negotiator already at the mall, but Sam felt sure Vine wouldn't accept the replacement. Something was strange about his insistence, anyway. Just as he reached his car, a uniformed cop called him.

"Deputy Gerard? Sabien wants to know who the guy at the mall is."

"His name is Tony Vine." Sam replied.

The cop relayed this information over his radio and listened to a reply.

"He says you must wait for him, he's coming."

Somewhat surprised, Sam waited, leaning against the car, until Sabien came hurrying out of the building a few minutes later.

"What changed your mind?" Sam asked as they got in the car.

"I know Tony Vine." Sabien replied.

At Sam's incredulous look he asked: "Do you know how he was arrested?" Sam shook his head.

"He knew the cops had proof of his guilt and were coming to arrest him. So he grabbed a guy off the street and forced him to take them to his apartment. By the time CPD had figured out where he was, he was holed up pretty good in there. I was sent to talk him out... and I did, after almost eleven hours of listening to him rant about how the world had wronged him. When he came out, it was a trick, anyway. He'd concealed a gun and shot me in the leg the minute he saw me. My team retaliated and he was wounded critically. So he spent some time in hospital before being sent to do some more in jail. I guess he blames me for all that."

"That's some story," Sam said. They were almost at the mall. "Do you think it's wise to come here, considering this?"

"Well, the guy's a wacko, and in my experience it's best to give a wacko what he wants, at least until you can distract and apprehend

him. Besides, there are lives at stake, and this is my job."

"Very well, then," Sam replied. "Let's go do your job."

* * *

Inside the shop, Fraser and Ray were sitting morosely on the floor, with their backs against the wall. Fraser sat closest to the front window, which was covered with sticky paper. Vine and his henchmen were keeping a casual watch on them, as if not concerned with their actions, but they handled their weapons expertly and it was clear that they would shoot, should anyone attempt anything.

Ray sighed. "I'm sorry, Benny."

"What for, Ray?" Fraser asked softly, an eye on their captors.

"For getting you into this. You're not supposed to be here... it's not your case..." He trailed off as he noticed Vine grinning at him.

"Now don't feel bad, Detective Vecchio... I am most pleased that Constable Fraser is here... in fact, had he not come, I would have made sure that someone brought him to join us."

Fraser and Ray shared a confused look. How did Vine know them?

"Sorry, do we know you?" Ray asked flippantly to hide a growing apprehension.

"Indeed, you should. It seems you have a vendetta against my family. First Uncle Randall..." he frowned. "Then, Uncle Cyrus..." he stopped and smiled broadly as they realized who he was talking about.

"Bolt," they groaned in unison.

"Exactly! So you see, it's no accident that you're both here."

Fraser cleared his throat. "Excuse me, but why do you want Chris Sabien? He has nothing to do with this?"

"He has everything to do with this! I want him to plead for his life! He's responsible for what happened to me and I'll make sure he'll regret it!"

Fraser and Ray listened to the tirade in silence. The, by now, familiar Bolt-madness clearly affected this member of the family too.

After a while he quieted down and went back to talking with his men. Fraser sat picking at a loose corner of the paper covering the windows. Eventually he had a hole as large as a quarter. Looking at his handiwork he spotted a little camera eyeing him from the other side. Giving it a little wave, he nudged Ray.

"What?" Ray asked, a bit annoyed since he'd been indulging in a daydream to keep busy.

"Shhh. Look."

"Ahh," was all Ray said.

Outside, someone was watching...

* * *

Outside, on the other side of the mall, Sam and Sabien were watching the SWAT teams assume strike positions. Sabien looked angry and Sam asked why.

"Oh, I know it's necessary," Chris replied. "But I prefer never to force tactical action. And after what happened last week, I like it even less."

"I see," Sam said. He scanned the area. "Well, they're set up. How do you want to do this?"

"Do you have phone hookup?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll hear what he wants." Sabien turned abruptly and went into the temporary command center set up in an evacuated shoe store. Sam paused for a moment to check on his team, then followed. Sabien was already on the phone, talking, presumably, to Vine.

"... do you hope to achieve with this, Tony?"

He listened to an answer.

"I don't think we can pick up where we left off... I'm not about to let you shoot me again."

"..."

"I'm here to get those hostages out safely, you know that. Your leaving walking is a distant second. What do you want?"

Sam listened without comment but he felt Sabien was not talking to the guy the way he expected. It was almost as if Sabien was goading him, angering him.

"... Helicopter, right... cash, right... Cyrus Bolt... right... I'll look into it."

Chris disconnected the line and came to Sam.

"Who is Cyrus Bolt?" he asked. "Vine wants him, inside a chopper, with a million in cash, on the roof of the mall in two hours."

Sam frowned. "I don't know... Cosmo!"

"Sam?" Cosmo came in from outside.

"Find out who and where one Cyrus Bolt is."

"Right." Retrieving his phone from his pocket, Cosmo left the cramped

space of the shop.

Ten minutes later he was back.

"You'll never believe this: Cyrus Bolt is in the Chicago Institute for the Criminally Insane. He was arrested seven months ago by Vecchio and Fraser, after he tried to blow up the city with a nuclear bomb on a train." He paused for his final revelation. "Tony Vine is his nephew."

Sam and Chris had listened to all this in amazement.

"You mean Vine had planned all this?" Sabien asked.

"Looks like it," Sam shrugged. "I don't suppose we're going to give him what he wants?"

"Not if I can help it," Sabien answered.

Turning, he picked up the handset and pressed a button for an open line.

"Tony? The helicopter is on it's way to pick up your Uncle Bolt right now, but it's going to take a bit longer than we expected ... we need more time."

Sam could hear the rage in the voice that answered, even if he couldn't make out the words.

Sabien waited a moment before responding.

"Please don't, Tony. This is not going to help."

Noticing Sam's inquiring motions he mouthed: "He wants me to go in."

Sam's "No" was decisive, but Sabien wasn't concentrating on Sam. He was listening to Vine.

"I'm not authorized to do that, Tony. Can you give me a few minutes to clear this?"

After listening, he disconnected the line.

"Sam, he wants me in there in two minutes or he's going to shoot a hostage."

"I can't let you do that. You'll just give him another bargaining piece."

"I have to!" Chris was putting on a bulletproof vest as he spoke. "I'm not letting my hostages be killed!"

"You're not..."

The sound of a single gunshot rang through the deserted mall, echoing three or four times and everyone froze, aghast. For Sam everything went ice cold and he was acutely aware of the smell of new leather, permeating the air.

* * *

Inside the shop, Ray sat with Fraser's head cradled in his arms. He was crying, but didn't even know it as he kept talking to the Mountie.

"Just hold on, Benny. Just hold on..." He glared defiantly at Vine, who was watching them mockingly.

"How touching," he sneered. "Maybe I should just put him out of his misery... or maybe I could get you both with just one shot..." He aimed carefully, and Ray realized that Vine really meant to kill them there and then.

"If you kill us you'll never get to see Cyrus Bolt!"

"Maybe so, but I'll also never again have to see you!"

At that moment the glass in the windows shattered as the SWAT team breached. In seconds Vine found himself surrounded, but he still had his gun trained on Ray and Fraser. He pulled the trigger.

Time seemed to slow down. The bullet hit the flying form of a man in mid-air and slammed him against the wall and onto Ray and Fraser. In the same instant another shot rang out and Vine slumped to the floor.

Sabien lowered his gun and ran to check on the inert form of Sam Gerard, who had shielded his friends with his own body.

Sam lay groaning on the floor, but his vest had stopped the bullet cold and apart from bruises he seemed ok. Fraser, on the other hands, was bleeding heavily from a wound in his chest, and paramedics were there almost immediately after the "All clear" was given.

* * *

A few days later Sam, Chris and Ray went to visit Fraser in hospital. After establishing that he would recover, Sam and Chris left Ray to keep Fraser company, and went to have coffee and donuts in a diner that Sam recommended.

Sam seemed unsure of what to say. He cleared his throat, drank some coffee, studied the passers by through the window. Sabien watched this with his quiet smile. Eventually he broke the silence.

"So, you're the great Sam Gerard?"

"Yes, I am."

"And you always get your man?"

"Unless someone else shoots him first," Sam growled.

"True," Sabien grinned.

Sam smiled.

"And you must be the legendary Chris Sabien..."

"Mm, what do you think?" Sabien cocked his head.

"And you never force tactical action?"

"I never used to..."

"Do you want a job?"

"What, as a marshal?" Sabien was truly surprised.

"Well, we are one short on the team..."

Sam's voice continues as the camera pans away, showing the street, zooming out to encompass first the street block, then lots of the high skyscrapers that make up Chicago's city center, and then FADE TO BLACK. The End.

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End
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